

And what has this House of Representatives done? Nothing. Not even a hearing. Now, we can blather on forever about all sorts of things. We can have 50 investigations of this or that day in and day out. But can we take an action on something that is staring us in the face, which is the forest fire crisis in the Western United States right now?

Come on. Wake up and smell the smoke before it is too late. Take action. Pass this bicameral, bipartisan reform supported by the President of the United States. Give us the resources we need to fight these fires and to prevent future fires so we won't have more years like this.

PUERTO RICO'S POLITICAL STATUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Puerto Rico (Mr. PIERLUISI) for 5 minutes.

Mr. PIERLUISI. Madam Speaker, I rise to provide an update on Puerto Rico's political status, which is an issue of national significance.

Puerto Rico is an unincorporated territory of the United States. Territory status is undemocratic. Although Puerto Rico is home to more American citizens than 21 States, island residents cannot vote for President, are not represented in the Senate, and have one nonvoting Delegate in the House.

Territory status is also unequal. As a recent GAO report confirms, Puerto Rico is deprived of billions of dollars each year because it is treated worse than the States under a range of Federal programs. Every objective observer understands that territory status is the underlying cause of the economic, fiscal, and demographic crisis that has enveloped Puerto Rico. History teaches a simple lesson: no people have ever reached their potential while being deprived of political rights and denied equality under the law. Puerto Rico is no exception to this rule.

If the people of Puerto Rico wish to discard territory status, there are two—and only two—paths forward. The territory can become a State on equal footing with the other States, or the territory can become a sovereign nation, either fully independent from the U.S., like the Philippines, or with a compact of free association with the U.S. that either nation can terminate, like the Republic of Palau. If Puerto Rico becomes a sovereign nation, future generations of island residents would not be American citizens and would receive reduced Federal support.

In a 2012 referendum sponsored by the Government of Puerto Rico, a majority of my constituents expressed their opposition to territory status, which means that Puerto Rico is being governed without its consent. Statehood received more votes than territory status, which is unprecedented. And statehood obtained far more votes than either of the two nationhood options,

which demonstrates that Puerto Rico has no desire to weaken or break the bonds forged with the United States over nearly 12 decades.

At my urging and in response to this landmark vote, the Obama administration proposed an appropriation of \$2.5 million to fund the first federally sponsored referendum in Puerto Rico's history with the stated goal being to resolve the territory's status. Earlier this year, Congress approved this appropriation with bipartisan support.

Although the law does not specify how the ballot should be structured, it does require the Department of Justice to ensure that any option on the ballot is compatible with the Constitution, laws, and public policy of the United States. Therefore, the ballot cannot contain the status proposal known as "enhanced commonwealth" that one political party in Puerto Rico has consistently put forward over the years and that Federal officials—including the Obama administration, Senators WYDEN and MURKOWSKI—have just as consistently rejected as impossible.

Moreover, the ballot should not contain the current territory status as an option because it was rejected in the 2012 referendum. It is the primary source of Puerto Rico's problems, and it does not resolve the island's status since, as long as Puerto Rico remains a territory, it has the potential to become either a State or a sovereign nation.

Last week, the Governor of Puerto Rico announced his intention to use the \$2.5 million to conduct a federally sponsored vote by the end of 2016. I have proposed that the Federal funding be used to hold a yes-or-no vote on whether Puerto Rico should be admitted as a State, just as Alaska and Hawaii did. This approach would yield a definitive result that nobody could reasonably question, and it has broad congressional backing, garnering support from 135 Members of the House and the Senate.

If the Governor of Puerto Rico resists this approach, he will face a problem. The party he leads has never been able to agree upon a status proposal that does not conflict with U.S. law and policy.

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But let me be clear. If a vote does occur, statehood advocates will show up in force. Any time, any place, an army of men and women will be there to seek equality and justice, and we will prevail.

PASS TERRORISM RISK INSURANCE ACT REAUTHORIZATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Wisconsin (Ms. MOORE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. MOORE. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of a clean Terrorism Risk Insurance Act reauthorization. Many of us on the House Financial Services Committee have worked on a bipar-

tisan basis. Let me repeat that and let me emphasize that. We have worked on a bipartisan basis for more than a year to put a bill before this House that can pass. We have worked cooperatively because the lessons of 9/11 revealed to us the raw exposure that this country faces and our economy faces as insurers exited terrorism risk insurance after 9/11.

But, unfortunately, some other Members are working on a partisan basis to derail the terrorism risk insurance program. Now, unfortunately, this fringe minority is more interested in promoting antigovernment ideology than governing on behalf of the American people and securing for Americans a safe harbor in the event of nuclear, biological, chemical, or other acts of terrorism. The dysfunction of the Tea Party-driven agenda—it thrives on crisis after crisis, whether it is flood insurance or the debt ceiling or keeping the government open or passing a transportation bill. They just thrive on keeping this place in chaos.

And here we have, once again, some must-pass legislation. Terrorism risk insurance has bipartisan consensus, bicameral support, and how does the Tea Party-driven leadership in this House respond to the attempts to reason with them regarding the urgency of passing a clean reauthorization of TRIA without the unworkable triggers and the bifurcation provisions? What we get is an arrogant rebuff, channeling Dirty Harry: You gotta ask yourself, do you feel lucky?

Colleagues, this is not instructive. And be clear, colleagues, the Tea Party is not just symbolically throwing tea overboard, but their antigovernment agenda is again throwing the American economy overboard. I mean, we have real world knowledge of what happens if TRIA is not reauthorized.

Following the September 11 attacks, the insurance industry met their claims and liabilities related to the attacks, but quickly, reinsurers and primary insurers withdrew from terrorism risk insurance. The resulting lack of coverage led to the loss of 300,000 jobs as economic activity slowed without coverage.

You hear them say that they want more private capital in the market, but their bill has exactly the opposite impact by diminishing market capacity. In fact, the RAND Corporation estimates that the terrorism risk insurance saves the government and taxpayers money that otherwise would be spent on disaster assistance following an attack. In the case of an attack as destructive as 9/11, the study estimates TRIA saves the Federal Government \$7.2 billion.

At this point, not even the majority of the Republican majority can have their voice heard in this House. I just don't understand why this House has to be constantly held hostage to a fringe minority of the majority that has no interest in governing.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that TRIA is the orderly response to a

major terrorist attack. Why are we providing confusion, uncertainty, and partisanship to helping this country recover in the unthinkable event of another successful large-scale terrorist attack?

I hope that the voice of the American people prevails and a bipartisan TRIA bill can be brought swiftly to the floor.

STATE MEDICAID EXPANSION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JOHNSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Madam Speaker, as cochair of the State Medicaid Expansion Caucus, I rise this morning to talk about how important expanding Medicaid is for my State and for the country.

First, I want to thank my good friend from North Carolina, Congressman G.K. BUTTERFIELD, for agreeing to co-chair this caucus. He is the driving force behind Medicaid expansion, that portion of the Affordable Care Act. There are few people in Congress who understand this issue as well as G.K. does, and it means a lot that he would agree to work on this issue with me.

I am also proud that 33 Members of Congress have joined the State Medicaid Expansion Caucus. We want to have an ongoing conversation about why it is so critical that every State expand Medicaid. Medicaid expansion is a choice that States can make because of the Supreme Court's ruling. However, when the Court struck down the requirement and gave States the choice to expand Medicaid, it did not strike the facts that make Medicaid expansion the correct budgetary, economic, health, and, yes, moral choice. Twenty-seven States, a majority of the States of this great country, looked at the facts and made the choice to help their people become healthier and therefore better able to lead productive lives. Expanding Medicaid in those States provided health coverage to approximately 10.5 million people who otherwise wouldn't have had it, according to Families USA.

Despite the political winds that swirl around the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid expansion should be a bipartisan issue. The Republican Governor of Arizona, for instance, pushed her State legislature to expand Medicaid because Governor Brewer and her allies knew that expansion would allow the program to help 300,000 low-income Arizonans who otherwise would not have had health coverage.

In Ohio, that State's Republican Governor expanded Medicaid, grounding the move in his faith and his belief that Ohioans should benefit from their Federal tax dollars. Because of the Governor's action, Ohio will see \$13 billion from the Federal Government over the next 7 years to cover those newly eligible Medicaid recipients, and approximately 366,000 Ohio residents are thus eligible for coverage beginning this year. According to some esti-

mates, as many as 789,000 people will ultimately benefit from the Governor's decision.

In California, almost 3 million people have benefited by getting access to health care when that State expanded Medicaid. These are just a few of the success stories.

The Federal Government will cover 100 percent of the cost of expanding Medicaid during the first 3 years, and 90 percent of the cost for the duration of the program in every State. Like in Ohio, this investment will bring billions of Federal tax dollars back into the State, which will help States develop their health care infrastructures and, thus, improve those States' economies. It will also help low-income Americans access our health care system. We must remember that the people who will benefit from expanding Medicaid are no less deserving of health care than anyone else.

According to a recent Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services report, States that have expanded Medicaid have seen 17 percent more people enrolled in the Medicaid and CHIP programs. Those are children across the country who now have the option for a healthier life. Unfortunately, millions of low-income Americans are being denied health care by their State legislators and Governors. They are being punished for being poor and for living where they do.

The New York Times recently ran a story entitled, "In Texarkana, Uninsured and on the Wrong Side of a State Line." It describes the harsh realities for those who live on the wrong side of the State line. The author wrote:

Texarkana is perhaps the starkest example of how President Obama's health care law is altering the economic geography of the country. The poor living in the Arkansas half of the town won access to a government benefit worth thousands of dollars annually, yet nothing changed for those on the Texas side of the State line.

In my home State of Georgia, expanding Medicaid would mean access to health care for 684,000 people, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. My Governor reacted to this news by signing a bill eliminating his authority to expand Medicaid. I can't think of anything better than the State of Georgia going ahead and insuring our people with Medicaid.

MEDICAID EXPANSION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. SCHWARTZ) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SCHWARTZ. Madam Speaker, let me begin by commending my fellow Congressmen, HANK JOHNSON and Congressman BUTTERFIELD, for their initiative and their advocacy in fighting for and speaking up for Medicaid expansion in each of our States that have not taken it.

More than 5 million people in this country now have health coverage

using Federal dollars available to every State to expand Medicaid eligibility to hardworking Americans and their families, but not in my home State of Pennsylvania. Instead, hundreds of thousands of people in Pennsylvania are left out. Madam Speaker, 305,000 people in Pennsylvania could have health coverage today but for the decision of our Governor. This is morally unconscionable and economically shortsighted.

Months have gone by, people are sicker, hospital bills go unpaid, and health providers struggle to stay at the forefront of innovation. Health care, whether it is to detect an illness or to treat a chronic condition or to save a life, is not optional. Consider the working mother who earns just enough to cover her basic expenses but not enough to get that mammogram so her breast cancer is detected early, and once it is, it is well advanced and life threatening.

Or the 9-year-old girl whose parents work full time at minimum wage and neither can afford to lose a day's pay to visit a pediatrician, so her need for glasses, something simple and correctable, or the early detection of diabetes, something more serious, is delayed or missed, with serious consequences not only for her health but her success in school.

Or the 52-year-old man who knows he should get that test that his doctor recommended, but simply does not have the \$2,000 it costs. So he puts it off, thinking he will get it one of these days, and never gets that simple prescription, that medication that can well save his life. These are hardworking men, women, and children across this country and in Pennsylvania who could have health coverage today but do not.

With \$8.2 billion available to Pennsylvanians, these are Federal dollars, dollars that Pennsylvanians have paid that are not coming back to Pennsylvania but would be available to us, are available to us. Over the next 3 years, we should use these funds to get health care to our people, to hire tens of thousands of health care workers to contain costs, to improve the health status of the people of our State, and yes to save lives.

There is no more time to waste. Pennsylvania should seize this opportunity. So should the other States that have Federal dollars available to them to do the same thing for the people of their State. We should use these Federal resources to expand lifesaving health coverage, to help our kids succeed, and to help us be healthy, to create jobs, and to ensure our economic growth. Let's do the right thing in Pennsylvania and across this country. These States should take Medicaid expansion and do right for the economy of our States, for the people of our States, and for the Nation.